

Title of Hearing:

Hearing on the accuracy and uses of the Social Security Administration's Death Master File scheduled for 2 February 2012.

FOCUS OF THE HEARING

The hearing will focus on the history, accuracy, use and impacts of the Death Master File along with options for change.

I am writing in reference to the hearing on the Social Security Administration's Death Master File scheduled for 2 February 2012. I understand that the issue at hand is the privatization of these records in order to protect the privacy of individuals and help prevent the fraudulent use of social security numbers. I am writing to request your support in the opposition of this action.

As a Landman researching title in the oil and gas industry for Marcellus Shale here in Pennsylvania and West Virginia, I frequently had to find heirs to mineral rights as a pre-requisite to leasing. The SSDI was of enormous help in constructing a genealogy tree to ensure we were on the right track to finding the correct property owners. I cannot imagine the nightmare of not having access to the SSDI to complete my work assignments.

Additionally, I am a member of the Unclaimed Persons volunteer genealogy group. Our purpose is to volunteer our expertise to find the next of kin for persons who have died so that their remains can be claimed for burial. If that can be accomplished, the local government does not have to bear the costs of burial. We do a lot of work for the Hillsborough County, Florida, Pottawattamie County, Iowa and Orange County, California, Coroner's Offices, and are starting to do work for other offices around the country due to our success rate. Often, the only starting information we have is a social security number, which tells of a date and state of issue, and birth date, all of which are invaluable in a search for next of kin. Since we are volunteers, this costs the county governments nothing.

Finally, as a genealogist for my own and others' family trees, I would simply be lost without the birth and death dates in the SSDI. I certainly would be chasing down many dead ends. I couldn't tell you how many people I've found due to clues from the SSDI.

Surely there must be another solution other than privatizing the Social Security records. Perhaps something as simple as marking an inactive number with an "*" so that it will not recognize someone trying to use the number for a fraudulent purpose would work. I just cannot believe that in today's technological world we can't find some way to do this. My personal belief is that we should not be using SS numbers for identification. I would rather see a national ID card!

In closing, please consider opposing the privatization of the Social Security Death records. I truly believe that there is another way to prevent fraud.

Regards,

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